

Kitchen Staff Training

By Stan Oman

The 2017 edition of NFPA 96, *Standard for Ventilation Control and Fire Protection of Commercial Cooking Operations* now includes a requirement for staff training. This responsibility falls on the management of the restaurant. Management will need to give instructions on the use of portable fire extinguishers and the manual activation of the fire suppression systems.

Once NFPA 96, 2017 edition, is adopted in your state, all new restaurant employees will need to be trained upon being hired. All employees, including current employees, will need to be trained annually going forward. Records of this training shall be maintained and shall be available to the authority having jurisdiction (AHJ).

In addition, OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) requires training for any employee that is expected to use a portable fire extinguisher. [1910.157 (g) (1)]

As a fire equipment dealer, you may find yourself being the one who is asked to give some answers on these requirements.

This article will give pointers you could suggest to your customer.

So, let's get started. If there is a fire, there is a good chance it will be in the kitchen. It is a requirement to have step-by-step instructions for employees on how to operate the fire suppression system and fire extinguishers. NFPA 17A, Section 4.4.3.6 and NFPA 96, Section 10.2.2 require a placard to be conspicuously placed near each Class K extinguisher. Both require that the fire suppression system shall be activated prior to using the fire extinguisher.



The Proper Selection of a Fire Extinguisher

Make sure your restaurant customers know the extinguisher types they are likely to encounter. Restaurant settings most often

have a Class K type in the kitchen area and a multipurpose (ABC) type in the dining area. Any training should teach employees how to check the label for the type of rating.

There are times that some people forget how to use a fire extinguisher, even though the fire extinguisher has pictures and text on how to use it on the front of the cylinder. Make sure your training covers the P.A.S.S method:

- Pull the pin
- Aim at the base of the fire
- Squeeze the handles
- Sweep from side to side

In the Event of Fire

Prepare your restaurant customers on the steps to take in the event of a fire. Suggest the following steps (courtesy of Amerex):

- 1) Evacuate all persons from the premises, in a calm and rapid manner.



- 2) Pull the manual pull station on the fire suppression system. Do not wait for the system's automatic discharge to occur. First pull the ring pin then pull the handle, hard.



CLASS A:K



CLASS A:B:C



3) Call the fire department. Regardless of the automatic system's effectiveness, always call in an alarm to the local fire department.

4) If it is safe to do so, stand by with a fire extinguisher designed for use on cooking grease fires. Never use a water extinguisher or a water hose on a restaurant grease fire. Doing so could increase the intensity of the fire and cause personal injury.

Safely Getting Out of the Building

Don't forget the restaurant customers! It is advised that the staff training include what the staff needs to do to assist customers to safely exit the restaurant. What if the emergency is not in the kitchen but around the main entrance? What other exit path(s) can be used? How many exits are in the restaurant? Are exit routes posted on the wall of the restaurant?

Emergency Lights & Exit Lights

The restaurant staff know the layout of the restaurant, but what about the customers? Maintaining the e-lights is very important. Emergency lights will automatically turn on if there is a loss of power. These will light the way. Exit lights will show where the exit doors are.

In Closing

Now that the staff has been trained, what else does the business owner need to



Potential Hazards in a Restaurant Setting

- The kitchen hood
- The fuel (gas, electric, and even solid fuel if they cook with wood)
- Power outage (a plan for egress for staff and customers will be needed)
- Lack of training and staff turn over

address? Maintenance! Restaurants need to:

1. Maintain the fire suppression system. At a minimum, the suppression system needs maintenance every six months.
2. Have the hood regularly cleaned. Grease will burn! The key to avoiding most kitchen fires is a strict hood cleaning regimen.
3. Maintain portable fire extinguishers. They need to work when needed.
4. Maintain emergency lights and exit lights. These lights let staff and customers safely exit the building.
5. Have an evacuation plan. There should be a place to meet outside. Once outside, the building should not be reentered.

Fire Safety Solutions for Restaurants

- In case of a fire call 9-1-1
- Maintain fire suppression system
- Schedule regular hood cleaning
- Maintain portable fire extinguishers
- Maintain emergency lights and exit lights
- Have planned exit routes
- Staff training

Knowing every regulation and requirement in a commercial cooking operation can be a challenge. Your knowledge can be a big help to your restaurant customers. They should have a fire plan in place and a maintenance schedule for all life safety equipment to help keep them compliant with state and national regulations. Fires happen and investing in fire safety should be a top priority for all restaurant facility managers. ❖

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